

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE AND AGENCY ORGANIZATION
CONGRESSMAN JON PORTER, CHAIRMAN



MEDIA ADVISORY

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***Chairman Jon Porter to Probe Allegations that Federal Scientists
Falsified Data Used to Establish the Safety of the
Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository***

What: Hearing, "Yucca Mountain Project: Have Federal Employees Falsified Documents?"

When: Tuesday, April 5, 2005, at 10:00 a.m.

Where: Room 2247, Rayburn House Office Building

Background:

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The Department of Energy (DOE) announced Wednesday, March 16, 2005, that Federal employees of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) of the Department of Interior (DOI) may have falsified data used in scientific studies at the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste project in Nevada. DOE made this discovery from emails exchanged by employees with the USGS dating back to 1998, which discuss fabricated results from water and climate studies at Yucca Mountain. There are a reported twenty emails which evidence that employees falsified their work. This revelation has sparked Inspector General investigations by the Department of Energy and the Department of Interior, which will not only investigate the employees alleged to have falsified their work, but also review the scientific data and the paperwork in question to determine whether the falsified information will affect the scientific underpinnings of the project. Nevada officials have also asked the FBI and Justice Department to investigate and seize all Yucca records in question as well.

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Specifically, the falsified documents in question relate to computer modeling for water infiltration and climate. According to experts, the water infiltration study is very important because water movement is critical in determining the integrity of the casks that will hold the nuclear waste and the possible spread of radiation from the repository. The more water that is shown to flow through the mountain could mean containers holding nuclear waste could corrode and possibly leak. The DOE has relied heavily on such computer modeling for water infiltration in its effort to show that Yucca Mountain can safely hold the nation's nuclear waste. If the computer models relied on to determine the safety of the project are flawed or have been faked, the safety of the entire project may be in question.

The purpose of this hearing will be to examine the veracity of the aforementioned allegations, probe into the extent of Federal employee involvement in the alleged falsification of documents, and examine whether the allegations erode the scientific basis for the proposed project. Both DOE and DOI have been asked by Chairman Porter to produce in unredacted form "all documents and records, including electronic communications, relating to, identifying, or discussing the falsification and/or fabrication of documents or records by any Federal employee, contractor or any other person used in relation to the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository" by March 29, 2005.

Invited Witnesses:

The Honorable Harry Reid, United States Senator (NV);
The Honorable John Ensign, United States Senator (NV);
The Honorable Kenny C. Guinn, Governor of Nevada;
The Honorable Charles G. Groat, Director, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of Interior;
The Honorable Ted Garrish, Deputy Director, Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, U.S. Department of Energy;
The Honorable Earl E. Devaney, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Interior;
The Honorable Gregory H. Friedman, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Energy;
Steve Frishman, Geologist and Consultant to the State of Nevada;
The Honorable B. John Garrick, Chairman, Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board;
Joe Egan, Esquire, on behalf of Attorney General Brian Sandoval of Nevada;
Bob Loux, Executive Director, Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects

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